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First Committee
12th Meeting
Friday, 24 October 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Nkgowe . . . . . (Botswana)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Verdier (Argentina), Vice-Chairman, took the chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Agenda items 62 to 82 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

The Acting Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): Before I give the floor to the first speaker, I would like to remind delegations that the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions on all disarmament and international security items will be 29 October at 6 p.m. I must stress that this deadline will be strictly implemented without exception or extension. In order to facilitate the work of the Committee, I would like to appeal to all delegations to submit their draft resolutions as early as possible, particularly those drafts that have financial implications and those that do not require extensive consultations. In this way, the Secretariat can process all the draft resolutions on time. I regret to inform the Committee members that so far only one draft resolution has been submitted to the Secretariat.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): The First Committee deliberates this year amidst major international and regional developments that are connected one way or another with promoting disarmament, strengthening non-proliferation, pursuing arms control in certain areas, regulating some international arms transfers, and bringing some transparency to disarmament. The signing by the overwhelming majority of States of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the establishment of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa and South-East Asia, and the adoption by the International Court of Justice of the advisory opinion on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, which stipulates that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament, are just a few of the positive dividends of the end of the cold war on the threshold of a new millennium.

Other positive changes have also taken place: the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention, the adoption of an amended Protocol II and of Protocol IV of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons and, last but not least, the elaboration of the Oslo treaty text on a ban on anti-personnel landmines. My delegation hopes that the First Committee's deliberations during its current session will further contribute to the advancement of the goals of disarmament and strengthening international security.

From Mongolia's perspective — that of a non-nuclear-weapon State — nuclear disarmament should retain the highest priority on the international disarmament agenda. Certainly, we acknowledge the primary importance of the bilateral United States-Russian agreements reached in Helsinki earlier this year, aimed at reducing existing nuclear-weapon stockpiles through the START process. In this regard, we welcome the declared intention of the Russian Federation to ratify the START II agreement and to begin START III negotiations as soon as possible.

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We believe that parallel substantive multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament should be pursued within the Conference on Disarmament — the sole multilateral negotiating forum — which would lead to a global and legally binding ban on nuclear weapons. As for the question of dealing with nuclear- weapon issues, Mongolia takes a practical and pragmatic position, flexible and open enough to initiate negotiations where progress is possible and feasible. In this regard my delegation concurs with the statement made earlier in the debate by the representative of Japan to the effect that

> "Idealism that pays little attention to reality cannot advance disarmament, but neither can realism which is not grounded in ideals." [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, First Committee*, 4th meeting]

Thus we face no unsurmountable difficulty in starting negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and concurrently moving to further other nuclear disarmament objectives.

The Mongolian delegation regrets that the General Assembly was not able to agree on the convening of a fourth special session devoted to disarmament due to a lack of consensus on its objectives and agenda. We hope that the Assembly will be in a position to take a decision on this important issue in the nearest future. Like others, Mongolia attaches major importance to the forthcoming second Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Mongolia, located between two nuclear-weapon States, promptly fulfilled its Treaty obligation by ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty on 3 July this year, thus becoming one of seven States to have ratified the Treaty. We urge all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify it at an early date. We are pleased that the Provisional Technical Secretariat, which was established earlier this year, has begun to put in place the Treaty implementation mechanism.

My delegation looks forward to the first phases of the establishment and installation of the International Monitoring System. I wish to place on record that Mongolia has submitted its two seismological and radionuclide stations, established with the assistance of the Government of France, to the International Monitoring System. To this end it is now making all necessary arrangements with the Provisional Technical Secretariat.

We are gratified to see the increasing trend towards the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones around the globe. Mongolia sees the establishment of these zones as important regional and subregional initiatives conducive to the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free world. To date, nuclear-weapon-free zones cover more than half the world, thanks to the Antarctic Treaty and the Treaties of Rarotonga, Bangkok, Tlatelolco and Pelindaba.

Mongolia welcomes the bold initiative taken by the five Central Asian States — its close, though not contiguous, geographical neighbours — to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Central Asian subregion, and it actively supports such a building-block, parallel approach to nuclear disarmament.

For its part, Mongolia is endeavouring to make its modest contribution to the logical development of the nuclear-weapon-free zone concept by advancing the concept of a single-State nuclear-weapon-free zone, reflecting evolving realities. We hope that others will continue to make similar efforts — collective or individual — however modest they may be, towards realizing the goals of nuclear disarmament. Mongolia's own nuclear-weapon-free zone status already enjoys the support of all five nuclear-weapon States that are permanent members of the Security Council and of the entire Non-Aligned Movement. Mongolia intends, at some stage, to ask the General Assembly to recognize it as such, like other zones, as envisaged by General Assembly resolution 3472 B (XXX) of 11 December 1975.

The Mongolian delegation notes with satisfaction the recent entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention as an important event of 1997. We are pleased that it was possible to establish quickly the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and that it has started to function smoothly. This is a tribute to the work done by the Convention's Preparatory Commission and its Provisional Secretariat. At present Mongolia is preparing to make all the necessary notifications, declarations and communications under the Convention, since compliance with its treaty obligations remains a vital objective for Mongolia.

The issue of landmines has understandably attracted the increased attention of the international community because of the thousands of deaths and untold suffering they cause the civilian population. Mongolia remains committed to the ultimate goal of banning this type of cruel and indiscriminate weapon. We believe that a comprehensive solution could be found through a phased

approach that would command international consensus by reaching a broad agreement on humanitarian concerns as well as the legitimate security interests of States.

We must continue to focus our attention on the disarmament agenda and to exert every effort to benefit from this rare and historic opportunity, which might not present itself again any time soon. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General to reform and revitalize the work of the United Nations in the disarmament field. We support his proposal to reconstitute the Centre for Disarmament Affairs into the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation. However, we would urge that the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament and other disarmament-related structures be kept intact and continue to play a vital role in serving disarmament negotiation processes and keeping the issue of disarmament at the centre of United Nations activities.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to thank the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific for its activities, for serving as a useful instrument for States in the region, and for fostering a climate of cooperation among States in this field. We hope that during its next 10 years of existence the Centre will continue the Kathmandu process and its other expanding activities. The international community, we believe, only stands to benefit from that process.

Mr. Ilboudo (Burkina Faso) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of Burkina Faso sincerely congratulates Ambassador Nkgowe on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee, and would assure him of its full readiness to provide all the support necessary to ensure the success of our work. We are convinced that under his leadership the Committee will make fresh progress on the items before it.

Progress in world disarmament in recent years has rightly given rise to hope, because it marks the first fulfilment of the potential that came about with the end of the cold war. The proliferation of treaties on the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the upcoming signing of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction are all clear milestones on the road to international security.

The efforts and sacrifices made to reach consensus will have been in vain if the treaties and conventions are not implemented effectively. This raises the problem of verification as a means for consolidating international peace and security and for building confidence. All treaties and conventions on disarmament and international security should therefore be complemented by control machinery that is effective: legally binding and universally verifiable.

Here, the idea of an international body mandated with particular verification tasks is most interesting. That formula would have the advantage of coordinating activities in this sphere and of combining effectiveness with lowered operating costs. The United Nations, which bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, could carry out these tasks in the context of a strengthened role and increased capacity.

We also welcome, and shall study, the Secretary-General's proposal to set up at Headquarters a new Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation, to enable the Organization better to address the many challenges facing it and to fulfil its mission.

We note that 148 States have signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, but the delegation of Burkina Faso regrets that a number of countries have not participated. The Treaty does not completely resolve the question of nuclear testing; it remains possible to develop nuclear programmes in the laboratory, with the risk of a race to achieve technological innovations in the nuclear sphere, and of an illicit traffic in such innovations for other than peaceful purposes. We call for the conclusion of supplementary treaties to fill this gap, prohibiting both laboratory nuclear tests and the production of fissile materials for military purposes.

My delegation welcomes the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, but still considers that such agreements should be more equitable and should above all contain guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon countries, with a view to creating the climate of confidence that is indispensable for universal adherence. In this context, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons — which remains unimplemented — was a valuable contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Another step towards nuclear disarmament has been the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in Latin America and the Caribbean, in the South Pacific, in Africa, in South-East Asia and in the Antarctic. But this movement should continue and be strengthened through the ratification of existing treaties and through the extension of the concept to other zones, so that our planet will ultimately be completely free of nuclear weapons.

Alongside nuclear weapons, other types of weapons which are far too widespread and just as dangerous and deadly demand our attention. I refer to conventional weapons. Their build up throughout the world poses a grave threat to international peace and security. Despite improved — relatively speaking — participation in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, transparency in the area of weapons remains a distant goal. We are witnessing massive, uncontrolled transfers of weapons of many kinds, principally to the least-developed countries, where they sow their devastation.

Although exporters and importers bear collective responsibility for the build up and massive transfers of these weapons, the importers — who are in fact the victims — should demonstrate greater restraint in using them. There is no doubt that to overcome this phenomenon there must be regional and subregional cooperation: the first step towards world security.

Turning to the question of the illicit flow of small arms, which causes and exacerbates instability in entire regions, especially in Africa, my delegation appreciates the contribution of the United Nations to the efforts of countries of the Sahelo-Saharan subregion to join together in combatting this phenomenon.

Moreover, my delegation notes with satisfaction the recommendations of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, and calls for their comprehensive and immediate implementation pending the conclusion of a binding agreement on small arms.

Burkina Faso has been active in the Ottawa process and welcomes the adoption at Oslo, on 18 September 1997, of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The delegation of Burkina Faso calls for universal accession to and strict respect of the Convention.

My delegation wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the principles and benefits of preventive diplomacy and calls on the community of nations to give greater support to subregional and regional initiatives such as those taken under the Protocol relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence and the Protocol on Non-Aggression of the Economic Community of West African States, and under the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution of the Organization of African Unity. These contribute to the preservation and maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Mugaviri (Zimbabwe): Allow me, Sir, through you and on behalf of my delegation, to warmly congratulate the Chairman on his unanimous election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. My delegation is confident that his vast experience and diplomatic skills will prove indispensable to this Committee as it tackles questions relating to international peace and security. In the same vein, allow me to congratulate members of the Bureau for the confidence bestowed on them. In that regard, my delegation pledges its full support and cooperation to the Chairman and the members of the Bureau in the execution of this enormous task.

The threat posed to mankind by nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction remains the biggest preoccupation of the international community. It is for this reason that the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament identified the need for expeditious discussions aimed at reducing and eventually eliminating these weapons of mass destruction. That finding by the special session was echoed by the International Court of Justice, which concluded in its epoch-making Advisory Opinion of 8 July 1996 — which should be a constant reminder, particularly to nuclear-weapon States — that there exists an obligation for all States to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

The Government of Zimbabwe has over the years supported, in various forums, initiatives and efforts aimed at reducing and eventually resolving conflict situations, as well as eradicating confrontations throughout the world. Committed to world peace as we are, our active participation in and support for the numerous resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly aimed at the maintenance and consolidation of international peace and security are sincere and free of both ambiguity and double standards.

Zimbabwe, as a non-nuclear-weapon State, is committed to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, as

well as to the elimination of nuclear weapons in a time-bound framework. In that regard, my delegation would want to renew its full support for the proposals made in Geneva on 7 August 1996 by 28 member States of the Conference on Disarmament for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Last year my delegation took the floor, in the resumed fiftieth session of the General Assembly, on agenda item 65, entitled "Comprehensive test-ban treaty". On that occasion, we were categorical in stating our suspicions over a flawed comprehensive test-ban text which had been snatched from the Conference on Disarmament and dragged to the General Assembly for adoption. We have yet to witness the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We pointed out that it was procedurally wrong to bypass the Conference on Disarmament, the body rightfully mandated by the General Assembly itself to negotiate the Treaty and to come up with a consensus text. Nuclear testing continues unabated, so long as it does not entail explosions. Our fears that that action may have constituted a precedent are confirmed by the current impasse on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament.

We are greatly concerned by the lack of progress in the 61-member body to agree on the programme of work after nine months of deliberations, as a result of the reluctance by certain groups to discuss the issue of nuclear disarmament. My delegation would like to reiterate our position that nuclear disarmament should remain the number-one priority, and in this regard we call for the establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament by the beginning of the 1998 session.

We applaud the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) on 29 April 1997 as a major accomplishment of the international community. Zimbabwe is happy to have been one of the original ratifiers of the Convention and would urge other countries to participate in the universalization of the CWC by ratifying the treaty. We also welcome the establishment of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We cannot agree more with those who have expressed their conviction that the Convention has broken new ground in the history of disarmament and in the elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

As a country situated in a region that is today a declared nuclear-weapon-free zone, Zimbabwe supports fully the idea of nuclear-weapon-free zones and spares no effort in encouraging negotiations on the establishment of more such zones, to build on the achievements of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Africa and south-east Asia, which through the respective treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok negotiated successfully and in good faith to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in their respective regions. These are commendable steps towards denuclearizing our nuclear-weapon-contaminated world.

Allow me to pay special tribute to the States of Central Asia, whose efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in their region, as evidenced by the recent Tashkent Conference, will go a long way in rendering irreversible the process of making ours a world free of nuclear weapons. Similarly, we find the concept of single-State nuclear-weapon-free zones both interesting and worth pursuing. We will, therefore, continue to support efforts aimed at promoting the southern hemisphere as a zone free of nuclear weapons.

Let me now draw attention to the question of anti-personnel landmines. The destructive potential of anti-personnel landmines has been a subject of protracted debate and has remained a great source of concern to the international community. Last year we were one of more than 100 delegations which co-sponsored General Assembly resolution 51/45 S on an international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines. We have not looked back since, and we are committed to seeing the Ottawa process to its logical end, with the signing of the convention in December of this year.

In his address to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session on 24 September 1997, His Excellency the Head of State of the Republic of Zimbabwe and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, President Robert Mugabe, was crystal clear on the question of landmines when he said:

> "In the area of disarmament, we welcome the adoption at the recently concluded Oslo Conference of the draft treaty on the global ban on anti-personnel mines. The overwhelming support that the treaty received is eloquent testimony to the determination of the international community to rid itself of these deadly weapons, which have killed or maimed millions of innocent people". [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings, 9th meeting, p.2*]

We cannot stay indifferent to the fact that there are more than 100 million anti-personnel landmines scattered in many countries throughout the world and that a little more than a third of them are planted on the African continent. Of those landmines, 1.3 million are in Zimbabwe, over a stretch of about 360 kilometres, and have rendered almost one million acres of land inaccessible, killing and maiming several people, mostly women and children, as well as domestic and wild animals.

In conclusion, may I state my delegation's resolve and determination to see the Ottawa process succeed. We fully support the draft resolution on the convention to ban anti-personnel landmines. Millions of people worldwide who have been maimed and disfigured by landmines are waiting patiently for the international community to pass a verdict on these lethal weapons. The international campaign to ban landmines is a cause worth supporting.

Mr. Akplogan (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): Following the example of many previous speakers, I should like, in my turn, to express to Mr. Mothusi Nkgowe the sincere congratulations of the delegation of Benin on his election as Chairman of the First Committee of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. My delegation will spare no effort to cooperate fully with him to ensure the success of our work.

Today, there is universal agreement that peace, if it is to be genuine and lasting, must be based on general and complete disarmament under international control. Benin welcomes the significant progress made in the past two years in the area of disarmament with the conclusion of multilateral treaties under the auspices of the United Nations.

There is good reason to recall the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which decided to extend that Treaty for an indefinite period, thereby opening up better prospects for nuclear disarmament. The adoption and opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly clearly marked a stage in progress towards a decisive objective for the international community in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

At another level, Benin welcomes the entry into force on 29 April 1997 of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. This also represents a major stage in the disarmament process.

In the framework of the reform plan that has been set out, there is a need to sustain the impetus provided by such success, in particular to reduce the remaining stocks of nuclear weapons and to eliminate them in due course.

Despite the progress made in the area of disarmament, the problems associated with conventional weapons, above all the proliferation of light and small-calibre weapons — and especially anti-personnel landmines — continue to threaten international security. In this context, as many delegations have emphasized, the absence of standards governing conventional weapons, in particular light and small-calibre weapons, remains a source of major concern for the international community. Indeed, in addition to the fact that it fuels armed conflicts, the illicit trade in light and small-calibre weapons is contributing to the exacerbation of violence and crime, which are rife in several large cities in developing countries, particularly in Africa. Member States must therefore work with urgency to find the best means of curbing the proliferation of these weapons, especially in zones of conflict.

That is why the delegation of Benin supports the conclusions of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, in particular the recommendations made with regard to the reduction in the circulation of those weapons and the prevention of their acquisition and accumulation, and calls for the implementation of those conclusions as soon as possible.

With regard to anti-personnel landmines, Benin welcomes the conclusion in Oslo of negotiations on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The opening for signature of this Convention in Ottawa in December will mark a decisive step towards the elimination of these lethal devices which every day claim innocent victims among the civilian populations in many countries of the world, in particular in Mozambique, Angola and Cambodia, despite the fact that the conflicts there have ended.

The consideration and resolution of humanitarian problems caused by mines and other non-exploded explosive devices, which have economic and social consequences that are very serious for the peoples of the countries affected, must be given high priority by our Committee. That is why Benin supports the idea that proposals relating to demining should be an integral part of the mandates of peacekeeping operations.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reaffirm that disarmament is necessary for the strengthening of international peace and security and for the mobilization of resources that are indispensable for any development work. The desire for dialogue and consultation, which Member States are demonstrating today, provides us with an opportunity, which we must seize, to take the decisions necessary to ensure that the process of general and complete disarmament is accelerated to benefit peace and development.

The Chairman took the chair.

Mr. Volski (Georgia): Since this is the first time that the delegation of Georgia has taken the floor, allow me to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to the chairmanship of this important Committee. We are confident that with your outstanding skills and experience you will guide this Committee to success. We would also like to express appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Sychou of Belarus, for the wise guidance and leadership he provided last year.

In recent years the world has witnessed significant progress in the field of arms control, disarmament and international security. The signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the steady progress achieved in Geneva within the ad hoc group working on the Biological Weapons Convention verification protocol, the establishment of new and the consolidation of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones, as well as the strengthening of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, are solid examples of the practical disarmament and successful non-proliferation policies of the international community.

Georgia actively supports these processes. Thus, in October of this year, during the IAEA General Conference, a safeguard agreement and an additional protocol were signed between Georgia and the Agency.

Unfortunately, a few days ago in the territory of Georgia, in one of the garrisons of the border guard division, a dangerously high level of radiation was detected, to which 10 servicemen were exposed. Upon instructions from the President of Georgia, a State commission has been established which, *inter alia*, is charged with the task of measuring and monitoring the radiation levels at all military garrisons left in Georgia by the former Soviet military command.

This unfortunate accident once again forcefully draws our attention to the whole complex of nuclear safety issues. Of course, the Moscow Nuclear Safety Summit was an important step which rightly focused on issues of storage, safe-keeping and ecologically sound ways of destroying radioactive nuclear material, whether such material is for peaceful purposes or released through disarmament efforts. However, we believe that that was just a first step, to be followed by others introducing agreed standards and establishing procedures for the handling of such materials.

Georgia attaches great importance to the control of conventional weapons and the prevention of illicit traffic in them. In many parts of the world this problem is fast turning into major threats to the national security of States and regional stability as a whole. This is especially true for those countries where state-of-the-art weapons wind up in the hands of armed bandits, terrorists and illegal military formations often disguised with nationalistic and political slogans.

Regrettably, a number of States have gained bitter experience of bloody conflicts, and the peace brought about by the tireless efforts of the international community is most fragile. My own country is one of those that has been victimized by the indiscriminate sale and transfer of arms, especially small arms. The separatist regime in Abkhazia, armed with the most advanced small arms, continues to retain part of the captured territory forcibly, thus preventing 300,000 refugees from returning to their homes. This conflict constitutes a threat to international peace and security in the region because of its potential to spill over beyond the region of Abkhazia proper. Consequently, the situation is far from normal.

At the same time, we recognize the positive efforts of the international community at several levels to deal with the issue of proliferation of small arms. The elaboration within the Disarmament Commission of guidelines on arms transfers, the Commission's consideration of the illicit arms trade and the recent report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms are welcome and long overdue steps which, in time, will constitute connected links in a chain of targeted policy decisions and practical actions aimed at eradicating this problem once and for all.

Despite this optimistic vision of our future we should admit that the present is rather gloomy. In the course of the debates, it has been pointed out that there are no agreed global norms or standards regarding the control of small arms — weapons that are most often used in regional and intra-State conflicts.

We believe that monitoring the illicit flow and use of weapons must be included in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations. United Nations missions should be equipped with sufficient standard mobile equipment for small arms destruction and should be regularly introduced into theatres of operation at an early stage.

Georgia is deeply satisfied by the recent decision of the Oslo Conference on Anti-Personnel Landmines to adopt the text of the global convention banning these weapons. Georgia is one of the countries affected by the horrendous consequences of indiscriminate laying of mines with total disregard for the lives of innocent women and children, who are the victims in most cases.

Georgia has taken note of the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at United Nations reform in general and at strengthening the Organization's capacity to deal with disarmament issues. We support his proposal to reconstitute the Centre for Disarmament Affairs as the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation.

We welcome the proposal concerning the creation of a group of interested States and hope that wide experience of peace-building will include the complex of measures that have already been successfully employed, as well as proposals elaborated by scientists in this field.

The success of efforts aimed at securing the future of the world depends greatly on how soon we respond to the rising challenges and how effectively we can implement new political methods as opposed to traditional dependence on military force. We hope that after the world has gone through this period of unprecedented systemic and conceptual shifts, it will possess a clearer vision of ways and means for dealing with present and emerging threats to prosperity and progress.

Ms. Donde Odinga (Kenya) Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Committee. I am confident that, given your wide experience, you will guide the deliberations of the Committee to a fruitful conclusion. In the same vein, allow me to congratulate the other officers of the Committee on their election. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support to that end. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Alyaksandr Sychou, for the able manner in which he guided the Committee's work during the last session.

Several developments have taken place in the field of disarmament since we convened here last year, notably the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC); the establishment of the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization; the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the decision to set up a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia; efforts to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention; and the recently concluded Oslo Diplomatic Conference, at which the international community adopted the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Landmines and on their Destruction. Achievements in the bilateral arena, include the outcome of the Helsinki Summit and the subsequent agreements between the United States and Russia on nuclear arms reduction.

Despite all this, we are concerned that undercurrents permeate all these developments. For instance, the CWC entered into force with the absence of one of the major declared possessors of chemical weapons. It is our hope that the Convention will truly be universal and that all concerned will take the necessary steps to ensure speedy ratification and compliance.

Equally disappointing is the announcement of subcritical testing by a key State Party of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) that burst the euphoric bubble following the signing of the Treaty in September last year. This continued testing does little to allay the fears of the international community since it allows for qualitative development of existing nuclear weapons.

With regard to the NPT, we note with regret that, after 25 years, the Treaty has not yet achieved universality. We welcome the decision by Brazil to accede to the Treaty and look forward to the second Preparatory Committee session scheduled for next year.

Kenya therefore supports the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV). This would help map out the priorities in the field of disarmament that will propel us into the next millennium. In the meantime, the priorities agreed upon at SSOD-I should continue to be the mainstay of our work.

My delegation notes with regret that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to agree on a programme of work for its 1997 session. We reaffirm our support for the proposal made this June by 26 members of the Group of 21 on a mandate for an ad hoc committee for nuclear disarmament, as well as the proposal for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons submitted in August 1996 by 28 members of the Group. We are convinced that the proposed programme of action provides the most logical approach to further progress in our pursuit for complete nuclear disarmament. Our conviction is bolstered by the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, which stressed the obligation for all States to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects.

Kenya therefore looks forward to the start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off convention. We reaffirm our support to the already agreed mandate, which calls for the establishment of an ad hoc committee to negotiate a non-discriminatory, multilateral, internationally and effectively verifiable treaty. Such a treaty would in addition have to be truly comprehensive and address the concerns of those of us who believe that our common security lies, among other factors, in a nuclear-free world. In the same vein, we call for the re-establishment of an ad hoc committee on security assurances.

Turning now to the area of conventional weapons, Kenya supports all measures to curb the illicit transfer of conventional arms and efforts aimed at promoting confidence- building measures, at both regional and subregional levels, as a way of easing tension and settling disputes peacefully. We call upon the international community to provide all possible assistance in arresting the proliferation of arms.

The destructive and destabilizing effect of landmines lingers on long after the end of a conflict. These inhumane weapons have caused untold havoc — mutilating, killing and maiming civilians, especially innocent women and children. These weapons also render whole agricultural areas physically uninhabitable and economically unproductive. In this connection, Kenya deplores the adverse consequences caused by the failure to remove mines and other unexploded devices after conflicts. We therefore support the inclusion of mine clearance in the mandate of peacekeeping operations.

In view of the above, Kenya joined the African consensus on the African Plan of Action to Eliminate Landmines adopted by the First Conference on Anti-Personnel Landmines in Africa, under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). We support the Harare Declaration that called for the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines in Africa, and the decision to make Africa a zone free of anti-personnel landmines.

In this context, we participated in the Oslo Diplomatic Conference on an International Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Landmines last September that adopted the convention encompassing a total ban on the use, stockpiling, production and destruction of anti-personnel landmines. In this regard, we appeal to Member States that are in a position to do so to provide the necessary information and technical and material assistance to facilitate mine clearance.

I would like to conclude by stating that Kenya believes that the measures on preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping outlined in the Agenda for Peace should be strengthened.

We, however, regret that the peace dividend expected after the cold war has not materialized. Rather, inter and intra-State conflicts have continued unabated in some countries. These conflicts undermine international peace and security since they spill over to destabilize neighbouring countries. They also have adverse effects on socio-economic development by causing the diversion of resources from development purposes to non-productive use.

Mr. Al-Hassan (Oman) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. Our congratulations also go to the members of the Bureau. By virtue of your diplomatic experience and wisdom in administration, we are fully confident that you will conduct the work of this Committee towards the desired objectives, which we hope will effectively contribute to international peace and security. I would also like to seize this opportunity to assure you that we are fully prepared to cooperate with you in order to achieve success in our work, and also to cooperate with all other Member States. We would also like to thank your predecessor who chaired the last session of this Committee.

There is no doubt that the last few years have witnessed remarkable developments in the disarmament process. In addition to the entry into force of the Chemical

Weapons Convention, a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has been concluded and the International Court of Justice has issued its Advisory Opinion on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, not to mention the other steps aimed at banning anti-personnel landmines.

Despite these positive steps, the discussions on the questions of peace and security today reflect the degree of divergence in the interests and priorities of the international community. For after interests had been focused on nuclear disarmament and the disarmament of other weapons of mass destruction, they have now shifted to less ambitious fields, such as conventional weapons, small arms and transparency. My delegation realizes that we cannot ignore these aspects, yet it feels that this shift will redirect the interests of the international community away from the main questions for which this Organization was established.

In the view of my delegation, nuclear disarmament is a pivotal field for multilateral international work and the basis for any discussions on the standards of disarmament because nuclear arms are the greatest threat to all of humanity. Based on this, the position of my country has always been supportive of all efforts that may lead to the elimination of such weapons. Furthermore, since the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is an effort that accords with the purposes of the Charter, my country supports these initiatives, and particularly the initiative aimed at making the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone and a zone free from other weapons of mass destruction. This initiative has, for a long time, enjoyed the support of the United Nations. Despite the fact that this is a practical initiative that serves equally both regional and international peace and security, its translation into reality is still facing objection by one country, namely Israel.

There is no doubt that the establishment of such zones must be based on the consent of all the States of the region and their total freedom of consent to these zones. However, the abuse of this principle and this right to have a permanent veto is in itself an issue that requires consideration of the legitimacy of such opposition.

The Sultanate of Oman is a country that loves peace and security. In its relations, it has made just peace based on respect for others, non-intervention in their internal affairs and the enhancement of international and peaceful cooperation its objective and approach. Based on this, and in support of it, my country has acceded to many international treaties, including the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

As the Foreign Minister of our country has said at this session from the rostrum of the General Assembly, my country, by acceding to the NPT, does not consider that the nuclear file on the Middle East has been closed, as if we were satisfied with the policy of fait accompli represented by one single country having nuclear capabilities and still remaining outside this Treaty. On the contrary, our ratification is intended to send a peaceful message to all countries that have not yet ratified it — and to Israel in particular — to take a similar step as soon as possible, so that all their nuclear facilities will be subjected to the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards system.

As for the Indian Ocean, which we consider a vital commercial passageway and a tributary of civilizational communication among peoples, my country, a member of the Indian Ocean Commission, has tried to the best of its ability to help the Commission, which was established by a resolution of the General Assembly, in the implementation of its mandate. While we welcome the meagre progress that has been made, we would like to express our regret at the position of some countries towards the Commission and its work. The delegation of Oman believes that it is high time, in the current favourable international climate, to review the work of this Commission and take a number of practical steps that can transform the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace and cooperation among the peoples and States of the region and of the entire world.

As for anti-personnel landmines, my delegation agrees with the Secretary-General's view that they are very dangerous and kill many innocent civilians in many parts of the world. My country, the Sultanate of Oman, thinks that the only way to address this problem is through concerted international steps aimed at finding a comprehensive solution to prevent the production, acquisition and transfer of landmines without any selectivity or exception at all levels.

On transparency in armaments, my country's delegation would like to confirm its support for the unified position of the Arab States, which is contained in the Secretary-General's report [A/52/312, p. 71] dated 28 August 1997. The Arab countries support transparency in armaments as a means of enhancing international peace and security. However, it is our opinion that in order to be successful, any transparency mechanism must be guided by certain specific principles, namely, it must be balanced,

comprehensive, non-discriminatory, and fully enhance the national, regional and international security of all States according to the rules of international law.

Within this framework, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms must, if it is to be successful, be expanded to include information on other categories of armaments that are not currently covered, such as nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, in addition to advanced technology with military applications.

As for the reform programme for the renewal of the United Nations, my country's delegation agrees with the point of view of the Non-Aligned Movement regarding the establishment of a new Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation to replace the Centre for Disarmament Affairs and regarding continuing support to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. We hope that the reform will enhance disarmament efforts by coordinating the activities of the Organization and all Member States, without selectivity, under the guidance of the Member States and within a framework of firm commitment to the relevant United Nations resolutions, without ignoring the priorities established by the international community with regard to focusing on the elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reiterate the urgency of taking advantage of the current favourable international climate to register achievements in nuclear disarmament, in order to make our world more peaceful and secure than ever before.

Mr. Rajerisonina (Madagascar) (*interpretation from French*): As this is the first time the delegation of Madagascar has taken the floor, Sir, we would like to congratulate you warmly upon your election to the chairmanship of this Committee. We also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau, as well as the secretariat. We are convinced that under your competent guidance, the First Committee will do its work well.

Since the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in 1978, and since the end of the cold war, there have been positive, encouraging developments with regard to disarmament and international security. Progress in non-proliferation and disarmament includes the following advances.

On 11 May 1995 the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) adopted decisions relating to the indefinite extension of the Treaty and the strengthening of its review process, as well as to the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation.

On 10 September 1996 the General Assembly adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which was opened for signature on 24 September 1996.

On 29 April 1997 the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction entered into force.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, negotiated in Oslo, will be opened for signature in Ottawa on 3 and 4 December this year.

At the regional level, the international community welcomes the remarkable progress made in disarmament by the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The Treaty of Tlatelolco established such a zone for Latin America and the Caribbean; the Treaty of Rarotonga for the South Pacific; the Treaty of Pelindaba for Africa; and the Treaty of Bangkok for South-East Asia.The existence of these denuclearized zones shows that the nations truly wish to free the world from nuclear apocalypse.

At the bilateral level, the START I and II accords between the United States of America and the Russian Federation and the prospective START III negotiations are positive steps towards nuclear disarmament.

However, despite this encouraging progress, much remains to be done before general and complete disarmament under effective international control is achieved.

The inability of the Conference on Disarmament to reach consensus on its agenda demonstrates the conflicting positions of the nuclear States and the non-nuclear States with regard to nuclear disarmament. How can international security be envisaged as long as nuclear weapons continue to be the most serious threat to the survival of mankind? Efforts to ensure the complete elimination of nuclear weapons must continue. In this connection, we wish to recall the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996 on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, and its conclusion that there is an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its

aspects under strict and effective international control. In this regard, account must be taken of the Non-Aligned Movement's position regarding the establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of an ad hoc committee to initiate negotiations on a phased programme leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons according to a predetermined schedule.

My delegation hopes that the Conference on Disarmament will extricate itself from its current deadlock in order to move negotiations forward in this regard, as well as on a non-discriminatory, universal text prohibiting the production of fissile materials for use in the manufacture of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosives, and on a legally binding international instrument to give guarantees to non-nuclear States against the use or threat of such weapons.

Since the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is one of the best ways to achieve the objectives of non-proliferation and ensure regional security, my delegation welcomes every initiative taken to create them. With regard to the Indian Ocean, Madagascar calls upon the major Powers and principal maritime users of the Indian Ocean to cooperate more fully to advance discussions on the achievement of the overall goals of a zone of peace in that region.

In addition, my delegation considers that the vital importance of pursuing nuclear disarmament is accompanied by that of ensuring the strengthening, effective implementation and universality of treaties and conventions adopted on disarmament so as to ensure international peace and security. In this connection, the international community must in particular work to set up an effective system to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

The kinds of conflicts that have emerged after the end of the cold war represent new threats to international peace and security. The impact of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, as well as the high rate of crime and violence, was emphasized in the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms submitted by the Secretary-General in document A/52/298. My delegation welcomes the measures adopted to deal with the problems created by such weapons at the regional and subregional levels, particularly in Africa, as well as the United Nations' support for those efforts. We urge the international community to follow up on the recommendations put forward by the Panel of Governmental Experts, which are designed both to reduce the excessive and destabilizing stockpiling and transfer of small arms and light weapons in the affected regions of the world and to prevent that situation from recurring in the future.

The delegation of Madagascar also supports the idea that increased transparency and exchange of information in the weapons sphere is a way to strengthen confidence and international peace and security. The introduction of a register including all types of weapons would help to improve international relations.

My delegation would also like to mention the need to pursue and encourage advances in science and technology for civilian purposes. International transfers of products, services and know-how with regard to the use of military technology for peaceful purposes are important for the economic development of States.

My delegation shares the opinion of those who believe that the question of security should be addressed through a multidimensional approach, embracing military, economic and social aspects, to ensure true peace. Poverty and the persistence and worsening imbalances that divide the world between developed countries, developing countries, least developed countries and poor, heavily indebted countries, are tension-creating factors that hinder the realization of a real and lasting peace.

As we approach the third millennium, the international community must commit itself to take stock of the overall disarmament situation, arms control and the questions of international security related to it, and set the path to be followed in this sphere in the future. My delegation supports the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament as a part of that endeavour.

My delegation would not wish to conclude without welcoming the Secretary-General's creation of a Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation as part of the United Nations reform programme, and we hope that it will effectively respond to the priorities of Member States in the sphere of disarmament.

Mr. Al-Anbuge (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to preside over the First Committee and to express to you and the other officers of the Committee my wishes for your success.

This session is being held at a time of striking developments in the disarmament sphere at both the regional and the international levels. This important change has been marked by, first, the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); secondly, by the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); thirdly, by the Advisory Opinion handed down by the International Court of Justice on 8 July 1996, which affirmed the obligation of States to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control; and, fourthly, the signing of regional agreements establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in Asia and Africa, and similar arrangements in other regions.

The consensus recommendations that emerged from the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the next Review Conference of the NPT set for the year 2000 were encouraging. However, the decisions taken at that session were far less satisfactory than those adopted at the March 1995 Review and Extension Conference, particularly with regard to the Conference's decision on principles and objectives and resolution on the Middle East, which contains a number of provisions to be implemented in the course of the Treaty's periodic review.

My delegation eagerly awaits the conclusions of the Preparatory Committee's second session, to be held next April at Geneva to ensure follow-up to the decision on the principles and objectives of the NPT. In this connection, my delegation supports the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which falls within the framework of international disarmament efforts. My delegation also supports the Group of 21's proposal of a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons and its call for an ad hoc committee to begin preliminary nuclear disarmament talks.

Efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East have not succeeded owing to Israel's refusal to forgo its nuclear option and adhere to the NPT as well as its persistent refusal to open its nuclear facilities to the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in accordance with Security Council resolution 687 (1991). The United Nations must take the necessary steps to prompt Israel to adhere to the NPT and to submit its nuclear installations to the IAEA safeguards system. In this connection, we should like to refer to paragraph 14 of that resolution, in which the Council

> "Takes note that the actions to be taken by Iraq in paragraphs 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 of the present resolution represent steps towards the goal of establishing in the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction and all missiles for their delivery and the objective of a global ban on chemical weapons". [Security Council resolution 687 (1991), para. 14]

As everyone knows, Security Council resolution 687 (1991) is a decision taken under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, which means that it is binding on all States Parties. Iraq, for its part, has discharged all its obligations under the resolution. Despite the fact that the resolution clearly states that all States of the Middle East should rid themselves of weapons of mass destruction, the resolution focuses solely on Iraq, while a blind eye is turned towards Israel, even though it is the part of the region that has nuclear, biological and chemical arsenals and long-range missiles. This is a flagrant demonstration of the selectivity of the criteria adopted by the Security Council and the uneven-handed way in which it deals with this serious question.

We believe that transparency in disarmament is an important means of consolidating international peace and security. The success of any transparency mechanism, however, depends on its being balanced, global and non-discriminatory. Any such mechanism must strengthen the international, national and regional security of all States in accordance with international law.

The establishment of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms was a first step long awaited by the entire world. However, though it is an international confidence-building and early warning instrument, the Register has encountered various problems, in particular the fact that approximately half the Members of the United Nations still refuse to provide it with the required information. States therefore need to be reassured if they are all to participate in activities connected to the Register. Moreover, the Register must be expanded to include nuclear weapons and sophisticated technology with military applications if it is to become a more balanced instrument, free of all discriminatory criteria, and to have a more global scope and the highest possible number of participants. My delegation wishes to affirm here its support for the reply of the Arab countries to the Secretary-General on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

The progress made in the elimination of anti-personnel landmines must be accompanied by other steps, such as a consideration of the right of peoples to provide for their national defence and the way to address the problem of mines laid in the past. High-quality technical assistance must also be provided to affected countries that are unable to cope with the problem unassisted.

In conclusion, we should like to ask that the administrative reforms to which the United Nations is committed not affect the priorities of the Organization in the sphere of disarmament, in particular with respect to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, which must remain the sole forum for negotiations in this area.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of Colombia, Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

Mr. García (Colombia) Chairman of the Disarmament Commission (*interpretation from Spanish*): Last week, when I addressed this body on behalf of my country, I extended my warmest greetings to you, Sir, and congratulations on your election to the chairmanship. Today, I would like to seize the opportunity also to congratulate my colleagues who have been nominated to the Bureau of this Committee and to assure them of our fullest cooperation.

In my capacity as the current Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, I have the honour to introduce the report of the Commission for its 1997 session, as contained in document A/52/42. As in previous years, the report consists of four chapters and annexes containing the results of the Commission's deliberations on the various disarmament items on the agenda of its 1997 substantive session. Chapter IV sets out the conclusions and reports of the subsidiary bodies, which duly reflect the status of the Commission's deliberations on the substantive agenda items.

The Disarmament Commission, as usual, organized its 1997 session in accordance with the mandate set forth in paragraph 118 of the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, as well as with the guidelines set by the reform programme entitled "Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission", which was unanimously adopted by the Commission in 1990.

At its organizational session, the Commission decided to include three substantive items on its 1997 agenda: item 4 — "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned"; item 5 — "Fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament"; and item 6 — "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". Three Working Groups were established to deal with these agenda items.

Since the item on nuclear-weapon-free zones was being considered by this forum for the first time, Working Group I focused its work on four broad areas: general overview and introduction; scope; principles and objectives; and recommendations. The intensity of the debate was a clear indication that worldwide support for the concept of nuclear-weapon-free zones was growing, as was the belief that such zones could contribute to improving the overall international climate. Although deep differences remained, rooted in the national security concerns of some Member States, considerable progress was made on this item by Working Group I. It was decided that the 1998 substantive session of the Commission would consider, among other things, the scope of the discussion, as well as topics relating to nuclear-weapon-free zones as means for enhancing peace, security and stability; the characteristics of the region concerned, including the geographical definition of the zone; the relationship between nuclear-weapon-free zones and existing treaties or agreements; the role of verification; and consultation and negotiating mechanisms and elements conducive to the establishment of such zones.

Working Group II dealt with the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. This item has been on the Commission's agenda for two years. Consensus has not yet been reached with regard to the objectives and agenda of such a special session. However, progress was made in the exchange of views on this matter. It was ultimately decided that the Commission would resume its consideration of this item in 1998 and, as delegations know, intensive consultations on this matter have continued. We are hopeful that a draft resolution on the fourth special session will be put before this Committee in the coming weeks for its approval and adoption.

The work done in Working Group III on guidelines on conventional arms, during this first year of the consideration of this item, has laid a solid foundation for future discussions of the subject. There remained some basic differences. Some delegations advocated guidelines

with a broad scope, while others wanted a different approach. We are certain that further progress will be made in the deliberations on this matter next year.

In spite of the divergent views held by member States, consideration of the subjects in the Working Groups throughout the session was extensive and serious. Most meetings were very well attended and it was quite clear that member States continued to view the Disarmament Commission as having an important role to play in the field of arms limitation and disarmament.

With respect to the organization of work of the Commission in 1997, I am grateful to note that the Commission was able to finalize its procedural and organizational matters in time to allow the work of the substantive session to begin promptly and smoothly. In this connection, I would like to express my gratitude for the efforts and cooperation of the Chairmen of the regional groups. I believe that the prior consultations proved to be extremely useful and contributed greatly to the organization of the Commission's work.

Finally, I would not want to close without expressing my gratitude to all delegations for their cooperation, their understanding and the efficient manner in which they conducted the work of the Commission this year. The members of the Bureau of the Commission deserve special tribute, particularly the eight Vice-Chairmen, the Rapporteur of the Commission — Ms. Genevieve Hamilton of Australia — and the Chairmen of the three Working Groups — Mr. Abdelkader Mesdoua of Algeria, Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat of Indonesia and Mr. Michael Hoey of Ireland. Their hard work and dedication to the tasks assigned to them by the Commission are widely known and contributed significantly to the success of the session.

On behalf of the Commission, I would like to express my gratitude to the staff of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs for their valuable assistance, particularly to the Director of the Centre, Mr. Prvoslav Davinic, the Secretary of the Disarmament Commission, Ms. Cheryl Stoute and their colleagues who served as the Secretaries of the three Working Groups. I would also like to thank all the members of the Secretariat who so efficiently assisted the Commission in carrying out its tasks.

With this statement, I am honoured to present the annual report of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (A/52/42) to the First Committee of the General Assembly.

Mrs. Topić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): First, allow me to offer you, Sir, my congratulations on your well-deserved assumption of the leadership position of the First Committee, as well as to the other members of the Bureau. My delegation pledges its full support and cooperation with the efforts of the Committee and is confident that under your leadership the Committee will adopt important decisions to promote global disarmament and universal security.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is keenly aware of the significance of arms control and the effects that imbalances of military assets have on international peace and security, as well as on confidence and perceptions between neighbouring States. We understand and appreciate first hand the deliberations of the First Committee, as we have uniquely experienced and continue to experience the effects of war, having endured the massive use of conventional weapons against non-military targets and still living with the horrors of anti-personnel landmines.

I would like to take this opportunity to bring the First Committee up to date on a most relevant issue regarding arms control, in particular with regard to the Dayton Peace Agreement. As the Committee knows, under annex 1-B of the Agreement, the parties agreed to a regional-stabilization arms-control regime. The details of this Agreement on subregional arms control were negotiated in Vienna and eventually completed in Florence. This arms-control agreement is a key part of the two-pronged approach to create regional military stability which will solidify and secure the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region.

At this time, the measures agreed to, in the letter, under the Vienna and Florence negotiations and, in spirit, under the Dayton/Paris Agreement have yielded their results.

The Republika Srpska, one of the entities within Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 31 July 1997 submitted a notification by which reduction liability was increased by a total of 840 items. This raised the second-phase reduction liability to a total of 1,965 pieces of equipment. During the third reporting period, there was further notification on reductions at seven sites. The fourth reporting period is currently being implemented. So far there have been notifications on reductions affecting 1,243 pieces of equipment. Upon completion of this, 20 pieces of equipment will remain outstanding. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the other entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, will finalize reductions during the fourth

reporting period by reducing or exporting its remaining 427 artillery pieces.

We are deeply convinced that it is to the benefit of all in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as to all in the region, to approach this segment of the Peace Agreement fully and consistently and to provide transparency while dealing with this sensitive and important issue.

My delegation takes particular note of and welcomes the statement of the Luxembourg delegation on behalf of the European Union, which stressed the importance of the success of this Agreement, and we can only reinforce the importance of this Agreement for regional security and, indeed, for international stability, peace and security.

Bosnia and Herzegovina also believes that a necessary condition for arms control is transparency. It is for this reason that our delegation will join in the calls for supporting the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. There can be no arms control without transparency and, of course, verification. In Bosnia and Herzegovina this transparency translates into confidence-building, both within the country itself and between neighbouring States. Bosnia and Herzegovina calls upon all its regional neighbours to approach military issues in a transparent manner so as to diminish and eliminate mistrust, misperception and potentially deadly mistakes. In this way our neighbourhood of south-eastern Europe will be a much more stable and ultimately safer place.

Of course, another issue — and perhaps the most important one to Bosnia and Herzegovina — is that of anti-personnel landmines. More than 3 million of these deadly devices litter our homeland. Their continued presence plays a role in impeding the return of refugees, freedom of movement and economic reconstruction — factors on which the relative peace in my country depends.

My delegation welcomes the agreements reached in Oslo. It certainly is a promise to the generations to come to put an end to the suffering and casualties, as well as to the contamination of our planet. With 17,000 minefields, almost one fourth of the territory of my country became a killing field. We therefore join the delegation of Canada in hoping to ensure at the Ottawa Conference the treaty's early entry into force and its effective implementation leading to the eradication of anti-personnel mines, as well as the rehabilitation and social integration of the numerous victims around the world.

While the issue of the production, sale, stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel landmines is the core of the problem, equally important aspects of the mine issue are the location, removal and destruction of existing landmines. It is in this context that my delegation calls for the sharing of information in mine-removal technology and techniques. Developing and economically poorer countries simply cannot afford the expenditures or time required for establishing research-and-development mechanisms beginning from scratch, and there is no reason that small States should be forced to do so. Often they also cannot afford to retain the expensive foreign firms with the necessary advanced technology. My delegation would suggest that there should be some consideration given to the establishment of an international database and/or an assistance mobilization group on mine-clearing technology and techniques.

I would like to add that if we truly are to attack the tragic problems of landmines, technical assistance should be geared toward a "train the trainer" approach. Only in this way can long-term solutions be found for today's real and deadly problems for the people of the world who every day feel the loss and tragedy of anti-personnel landmines. We see evidence of this approach in Bosnia and Herzegovina and believe it will in the longer term prove itself most effective.

Allow me again to underline that we must not forget the victims of landmines in our discussions. Technology and techniques in the fields of rehabilitation and education also need to be shared, both for the individual victims' sake and for the sake of society at large. In this way the innocent victims of the landmine scourge will be able to function as essential members of society. Education on the dangers and presence of landmines through mine-awareness and other programmes can also serve to prevent further casualties due to landmines.

My delegation is fully committed to the principle of international peace and security and believes that international arms-control regimes are a necessary and positive tool in making the world a better and safer place. For this reason we have signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and have also ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

Let me point out once again the utmost importance of the success of the aforementioned Agreement relating to arms-control arrangements and transparency in our own region. This is one of the crucial issues for ensuring that

the tragic experience of the past four years will not be repeated again and that the relative peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in our region, will be secured and enhanced.

The Chairman: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate. This concludes the first phase of the work of the Committee. In accordance with the adopted programme of work, the Committee will now embark on the second phase of its work, namely, informal meetings for structured discussion of specific subjects on the adopted thematic approach on disarmament and international security agenda items.

The indicative timetable for this phase of the work of the Committee, as recommended by the Bureau, has been distributed to delegations. It is understood that when the Committee concludes the subjects allocated for each meeting, the available time remaining could be utilized by various groups for consultations on draft resolutions or other matters of interest to the Committee.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I now call on the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): As members will recall, at the Committee's organizational meeting held on 9 October the Secretariat distributed copies of the unedited transcript of the Committee's 8th meeting last year, in compliance with the request of the Committee on Conferences. I also invited delegations to comment on how the unedited transcript compared with the official record of the 8th meeting of the Committee. So far I have not received any comments.

Accordingly, if I do not receive comments from delegations by 30 October, I will assume that delegations are satisfied with the present arrangement for the official records of the Committee and that no change should be made. I will convey the wish of the Committee to the Committee on Conferences.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.